

This Page Is Inserted by IFW Operations
and is not a part of the Official Record

BEST AVAILABLE IMAGES

Defective images within this document are accurate representations of the original documents submitted by the applicant.

Defects in the images may include (but are not limited to):

- BLACK BORDERS
- TEXT CUT OFF AT TOP, BOTTOM OR SIDES
- FADED TEXT
- ILLEGIBLE TEXT
- SKEWED/SLANTED IMAGES
- COLORED PHOTOS
- BLACK OR VERY BLACK AND WHITE DARK PHOTOS
- GRAY SCALE DOCUMENTS

IMAGES ARE BEST AVAILABLE COPY.

**As rescanning documents *will not* correct images,
please do not report the images to the
Image Problem Mailbox.**

IN THE CLAIMS

In response to this Office Action, please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Allowed)

A reinforcing structure of a fuel tank having a first and an opposing second wall defining a fuel chamber, the reinforcing structure comprising:

a first indentation carried unitarily by the first wall and extending into the fuel chamber, the first indentation having a bottom portion engaged to the opposing second wall; and

a stress relief feature disposed within the chamber, the stress relief feature having an engagement area being annular in shape and thus formed by the engagement of the bottom portion to the opposing second wall.

2. (Allowed)

The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 1 comprising a second indentation carried unitarily by the second wall, the second indentation having a bottom portion wherein the stress relief feature is formed between the bottom portions of the first and second indentations.

3. (Allowed)

The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 2, wherein the bottom portions of the first and second indentations enclosed by the annular engagement area form a void.

4. (Allowed)

The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 3, wherein the stress relief feature has a radial opening communicating between the void and the chamber and for providing a starting point for a bursting tear through the annular engagement area when a predetermined internal or external pressure is exceeded.

5. (Allowed)

a The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 4 wherein the circumferential orientation of the opening is dependent upon the direction of adverse forces exerted upon the tank.

6. (Allowed)

The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 3, wherein the bottom portions of the first and second indentations have a substantially constant wall thickness, and wherein the engagement area is seventy-five percent or less than the cross section area of either adjacent indentation.

7. (Allowed)

The reinforcing structure set forth in claim 6, wherein the fuel tank is a multi-layered structure of plastic material and is formed by a blow mold process.

8. (Currently Amended)

A fuel tank comprising:

a first wall;

a second wall generally opposed to the first wall;

a fuel chamber defined between the first and second walls; [and]

a reinforcing structure having a first indentation unitary with the first wall,
projecting into the chamber from the first wall [,] and having a bottom portion;

a second indentation unitary with the second wall, projecting into the chamber
from the second wall[,]
and having a bottom portion generally opposed to the bottom
portion of the first indentation; and

a stress relief feature disposed within the chamber, and [wherein a] the stress
relief feature is adhered to the bottom portion of the first indentation [is engaged to a]
and adhered to the bottom portion of the second indentation which will yield upon
excessive force being applied to the walls before the walls tear .

9. (Cancelled)

⁹
~~10.~~ (Currently Amended)

[The fuel tank set forth in claim 9 wherein]

A fuel tank comprising:

a first wall;

a second wall opposed to the first wall;

a chamber defined between the first and second walls;

a reinforcing structure having a first indentation unitary to the first wall, projecting into the chamber from the first wall and having a bottom portion;

a second indentation unitary to the second wall, projecting into the chamber from the second wall and having a bottom portion;

a stress relief feature disposed within the chamber, engaged to the bottom portion of the first indentation and engaged to the bottom portion of the second indentation; and

the stress relief feature is disposed between the bottom portions of the first and second indentations and wherein the bottom portions are engaged directly by an engagement area of the stress relief feature.

10
11. (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim 10 wherein the engagement area is welded and annular in shape, and wherein the bottom portions disposed radially inward from the engagement area form a substantial spherical void.

11
12. (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim 11 wherein the stress relief feature has a radial opening communicating between the chamber and the void.

12
13. (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim 12 wherein the radial opening and the engagement area are disposed along an imaginary plane.

¹³
14. (Currently Amended)

[The fuel tank set forth in claim 9 wherein]

A fuel tank comprising:

a first wall;

a second wall opposed to the first wall;

a chamber defined between the first and second walls;

a reinforcing structure having a first indentation unitary to the first wall, projecting into the chamber from the first wall and having a bottom portion;

a second indentation unitary to the second wall, projecting into the chamber from the second wall and having a bottom portion;

a stress relief feature disposed within the chamber, engaged to the bottom portion of the first indentation and engaged to the bottom portion of the second indentation; and

the stress relief feature has an elongated stress relief bar disposed within the chamber and engaged between the first and second indentations at opposing ends.

¹⁴
~~15~~. (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim ¹³~~14~~ wherein the stress relief feature has a groove carried transversely by the bar and for providing a starting point for a bursting tear through the bar when a predetermined internal or external pressure is exceeded.

¹⁵
~~16.~~ (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim ¹⁵~~16~~ wherein the stress relief bar is made of plastic.

¹⁶
~~17.~~ (Currently Amended)

[A fuel tank comprising:

a first wall;

a second wall opposed to the first wall;

a first indentation projecting into the chamber from the first wall;

a second indentation projecting into the chamber from the second wall;]

The fuel tank set forth in claim 10 wherein the stress relief feature includes a

hollow protrusion projecting acutely via a juncture into the chamber from [a distal] the
end portion of the second indentation; and

wherein the hollow protrusion engages the bottom portion of the first
indentation[at a distal end].

¹⁷
~~18.~~ (Original)

The fuel tank set forth in claim ¹⁷~~18~~ comprising:

the second wall having an interior surface exposed to the chamber and an exterior
surface;

a plug engaged sealably to the exterior surface of the second wall at the second
indentation; and

a secondary chamber defined by the second indentation and carried between the
exterior surface of the second wall and the plug.

⁸
~~19~~. (Original)

¹⁷
The fuel tank set forth in claim ~~18~~ wherein the smallest wall thickness defined between the interior and exterior surfaces of the second wall is located at the juncture of the second indentation, and wherein the cross section area of the second indentation at the juncture is smaller than the area of the distal end of the protrusion.

¹⁹
~~20~~. (Original)

¹⁸
The fuel tanks set forth in claim ~~19~~ wherein the distal end is square in shape.
